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ABSTRACT

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) of the state of Washington is a family-focused program designed to help 4-year-old children from low-income families succeed in the public education system. The ECEAP is comprised of four interactive components that relate to education, parent involvement, health and nutrition, and family support services. This document summarizes the findings of the second year of a longitudinal study that is tracking the success of children and families served by ECEAP. The second year report presents data from the 1988-89 and 1989-90 school years. Study findings that relate to seven program goals are reported. Children made significant gains related to the goals of establishing expectations of success, enhancing cognitive skills, encouraging self-confidence, and improving health and physical abilities. Gains related to the goals of increasing children's and families' abilities to relate, and of enhancing the sense of self-worth were not significant. Some gains related to families' access to money and resources were reported. Graphs that illustrate the population served by ECEAP, and a preview of the reports for the third and fourth years of the study are appended. (BC)

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ECEAP Longitudinal Study

A SUMMARY OF REPORT FINDINGS

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Tracking Success Of ECEAP Children and Families 1990

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ECEAP Longitudinal Study

Summary of
Year Two Report
1990

Washington's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is a family-focused preschool program designed to help four-year-old children succeed in the public education system. ECEAP consists of four interrelated components: education, health and nutrition, family services, and parent involvement.

A longitudinal study is tracking the success of ECEAP children and families over an eight-year period. Year Two Report findings reveal:

- Children showed highly significant gains in assessments that measure cognitive, language, vocabulary, and motor skills;
- Children's confidence levels gained significantly during the course of the ECEAP year;
- Children became significantly more capable of expressing social and emotional needs during the course of the year;
- Families report their access to money and other basic resources improved significantly over the year; and
- Ninety percent of the parents whose children have "graduated" from ECEAP report their children enjoyed elementary school.

The Year Two Report focused on:

- Immediate impacts of participation in ECEAP based on analysis of fall and spring assessments of two of the three waves of ECEAP children who will participate in the study; and
- Preliminary findings from the follow-up of the first wave of ECEAP children at the completion of their kindergarten year.

Who does ECEAP serve?

An ECEAP child is typically four years of age, not yet in kindergarten, and from a family whose income during the last 12 months has been at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Staff recruit and enroll eligible children regardless of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, or disabling conditions.

The broad intent of ECEAP, to provide enhanced learning opportunities to children at risk of school failure, allows local programs to fill up to 10 percent of their enrollment with children who are at risk of school failure due to socio-economic factors other than the income criteria, including developmental delays, neglect, or abuse. In addition, one of every 10 enrollment slots is targeted to Native American and migrant or seasonal farmworker children, since these populations have historically had limited access to intervention and social services.

ECEAP Administration

ECEAP is administered by the Department of Community Development, Community Assistance Division, which contracts with local agencies to provide ECEAP services in their communities. Contractors include Head Start grantees, school districts, community colleges, local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and child care providers. Parents, community leaders, and organizations collaborate to define and develop programs that are most appropriate to the children and families of that community.

ECEAP Components

Because many factors affect a child's ability to learn and develop, ECEAP is comprised of four interactive components:

- ***Education:*** Developmentally appropriate cognitive and social education, with an emphasis on language development and readiness for formal schooling;
- ***Parent Involvement:*** Parents take part in, and make decisions about, their children's education through involvement in policy councils, support groups, and work in the classroom and home;
- ***Health and Nutrition:*** Children gain access to medical, dental, and mental health services, and receive meals and snacks as part of the classroom experience;
- ***Family Support Services:*** Families receive assistance in finding needed social services, as well as training to develop and enhance parenting skills.

What is ECEAP?

A planning grant, introduced by Governor Booth Gardner and authorized by the Washington State Legislature in 1985, allowed a 30-member statewide advisory committee to develop a blueprint for ECEAP. In 1986, that plan was endorsed by the Legislature with a grant of $2.97 million that served 1,000 children in the first year. ECEAP has grown steadily since that time, through support of the Governor and bipartisan legislative support. The most recent legislative session (1991) saw enhancement of ECEAP funding that, in tandem with Head Start and other federal funding, will provide services to all eligible four-year-olds in the state.

Studying the Effects of ECEAP

The ECEAP Longitudinal Study is legislatively mandated to measure the return on the state's investment in the program. It is designed to evaluate ECEAP's effectiveness in preparing children for success in the common school system, and parents for participating in their children's schooling and success. The Year Two Report documents study findings for the 1988-89 and 1989-90 service years combined.

The study is being conducted by an independent contractor, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) of Portland, Oregon. The study methodology has been developed in cooperation with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Data for the study is collected by local ECEAP contractors with assistance from school districts.

In each of the 1988-89, 1989-90, and 1990-91 program years, approximately one-third of the children enrolled in ECEAP were recruited to participate in the study, for a total of 1,355 children. These children will be tracked through the fourth grade. A matched control group of 450 children is currently being identified, with the help of school districts around the state, and will be tracked simultaneously to provide comparison data.

ECEAP Goals

Initial results from the Longitudinal Study indicate that ECEAP children are gaining in desired program outcomes. Analyzed in terms of the eight program goals, the study to date finds the following results:

Goal #1:

Establishment of patterns and expectations of success

ECEAP children demonstrated very significant and significant* progress in the areas of increased motivation/achievement, reduced insecurity, and reduced shyness.

Students made substantial progress in overcoming debilitating initial traits such as insecurity and shyness, and made very substantial gains in such motivation and achievement variables as quickness, willingness to explore, and listening well.

Goal #2:

Enhancement of cognitive processes and skills

Children made statistically very significant gains on all measures of cognitive processes and skills. Of particular note were gains made by children in Home-Based Option programs. These children succeeded in overcoming initial significantly lower language and verbal readiness levels during the ECEAP year, bringing them up to the higher levels of Center-Based Option children at the end of the program year.

Goal #3:

Encouragement of self-confidence, curiosity, and self-discipline

Children made very significant gains in expressing their emotions and needs for attention by the end of the year.

Goal #4:

Improvement of child's health and physical abilities

Children demonstrated a very significant gain in motor skills over the term of the ECEAP year. These gains involve both psychomotor and gross motor skills. Significant ethnic stratification at the beginning of the program year disappeared by the end of the year.

* Degrees of statistical reliability

Goal # 5:

Nutrition

Study variables were designed to address this goal in the Year Three Report.

Goal # 6:

Increased ability of child and family to relate to others

Gains made in this area were not statistically significant. *

Goal #7:

Enhancement of dignity and sense of self-worth

Gains made in this area were not statistically significant.**

Goal #8:

Family empowerment in parenting, resource access, self-sufficiency, and improved child advocacy

In measures relating to access to money and other basic resources, significant gains were reported by parents. These gains were concentrated among parents in Center-Based programs, leading study researchers to hypothesize that this may be the result of the networking that characterizes those programs.

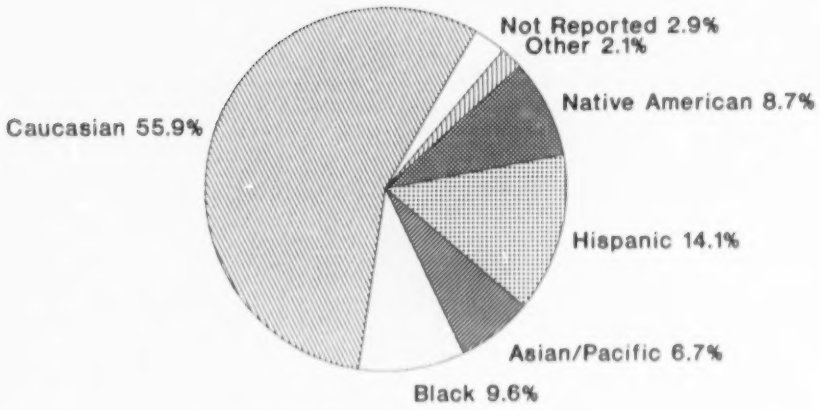
* Gains of 0.1 were recorded in the area of "Time for Family."
** Gains of 0.4 were recorded in the "Personal Well-Being Index," but no gains were recorded in other variables that addressed this goal.

Who ECEAP Serves

The ECEAP Population
during the
1988-89 and 1989-90
Program Years

Figure 3.1

ETHNIC ORIGIN



ECEAP Population

Ethnicity

Over 41 percent of the E CEAP population was made up of ethnic populations other than Caucasian during the two program years covered by the Year Two Report.

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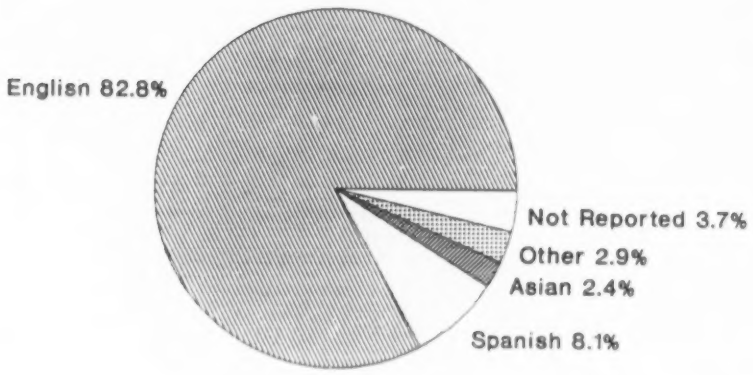
Figure 3.2

PRIMARY LANGUAGE



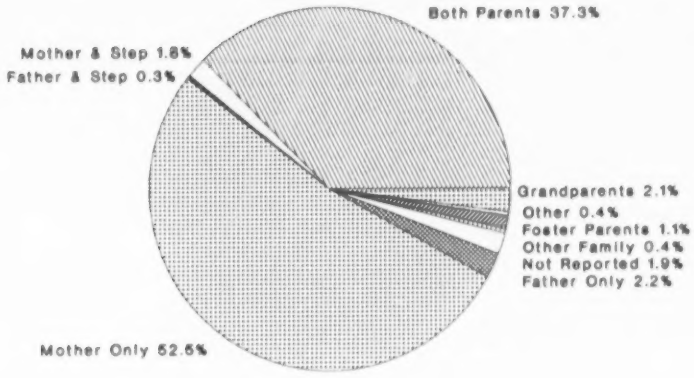
ECEAP Population

Primary Language:

A total of 17 languages have been reported by ECEAP contractors. While the majority of non-English speaking families use Spanish as their primary language, languages as diverse as Laotian, Tagalog, Arabic, and Ethiopian are being reported by contractors. The City of Seattle ECEAP reports that 39 different dialects are spoken among their Asian language speaking families alone.

Figure 3.10

FAMILY CONFIGURATION



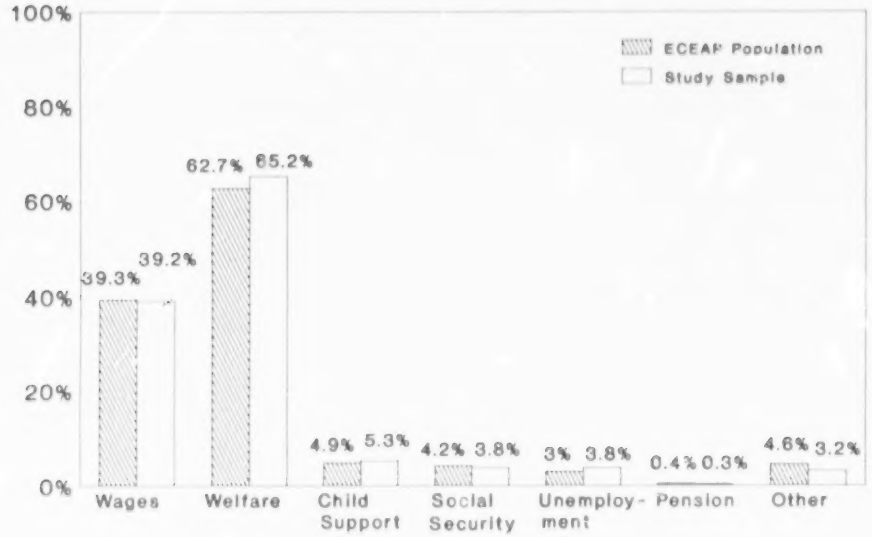
ECEAP Population

Family Configuration:

The majority of ECEAP children live with their single mothers.

Figure 3.12

INCOME SOURCES

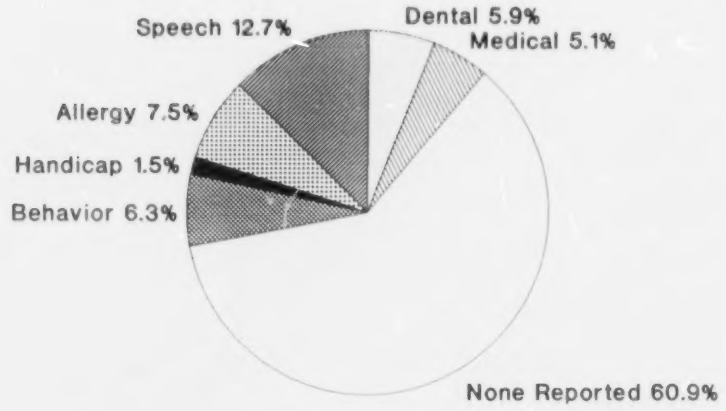


Income Sources:

While the majority of families report their incomes to be derived primarily from welfare, increasing numbers of families enrolled in ECEAP are from the "working poor," i.e., working at jobs with wages that leave them with incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level.

Figure 3.3

HEALTH & DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS



ECEAP Population

Health and Developmental Problems:

Health has perhaps the most dramatic impact on a child's ability to meet with success in school. Preliminary data show this component of ECEAP may also be one of the most cost-effective areas of the program. National statistics have shown that every dollar invested in immunizations alone results in $11 saved in corrective health care and hospital costs.

Approximately 40 percent of ECEAP parents identify their children as having special health, developmental or behavioral needs. The Year Three Report will include a detailed assessment of needs identified by ECEAP programs.

Year Three Report

In the 1990-91 Program Year, approximately 5,000 children were served. The third, and final, wave of 949 study sample children were added in this year.

The Year Three Report will include findings for all three study sample waves on each on the ECEAP goals, as well as new data to measure the effects of the ECEAP health component (medical, dental, and nutritional) on children and families. Health data results will cover issues such as:

- Immunization status of children upon enrollment in ECEAP;
- Extent to which ECEAP staff identify health, dental, and nutritional needs of children and families;
- Extent to which ECEAP assists and/or ensures families receive appropriate treatment once special needs are identified;
- Extent to which ECEAP assists in identifying or providing resources so families can access appropriate treatment; and
- Parents' ratings of child and family state of health, access to health care, knowledge of health and nutrition, and changes in these areas during the course of the ECEAP year.

Year Four Report

In the 1991-92 Program Year, data for the Year Four Report will be collected. The report will include:

- Follow-up data on 250 children who have completed the second grade;
- Follow-up data on 156 children who have completed the first grade;
- Follow-up data on 949 children who have completed kindergarten; and
- Assessment information on 450 matched control children in kindergarten, first, and second grades.

Children from the newly added control groups will be demographically similar to ECEAP children except that they did not have access to comprehensive preschool services. Comparison of this group with ECEAP children will provide information on ECEAP's effectiveness in the four program component areas.

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

For more information, or to receive a copy of the Year Two or Year Three Reports, contact:

Washington State Department of Community Development
Community Assistance Division/Children's Services Unit
Ninth and Columbia Building, MS/GH-51
Olympia, Washington 98504-4151
(206) 586-0496

Chuck Clarke, Director
Peggy Jo Mihata, Assistant Director
Mary Frost, Children's Services Unit Manager

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WASHINGTON STATE'S

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Department of Community Development
Ninth & Columbia Bldg., MS/GH-51
Olympia, Washington 98504-4151

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